

OUR MIRACULOUS JOURNEY

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(Coventry U.K.)



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This is a first-hand experience of my wife and I, during our visit to India during the year 2020, where we were caught unaware in the life threatening grip of the Corona Virus. The whole of India along with other countries of the world stood still with no flights, trains or any form of travel resources. It seemed as a holocaust was looming above and at any moment anything drastic could happen. Friends refused to entertain their friends and relatives shirked to meet each other. The

roads in India where millions thronged previously were completely deserted. All shops which used to be open till midnight were completely shut, and the only open for business were the shops selling essential products, where also the merchandise was running low with the dire needs of the public. Every household need was in scarcity with rationing of the fundamental commodities. Our plight is during this difficult period and how with the grace of Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji, we reached our home in England, is a journey full of miracles

Our miraculous journey to India began on the 8th of March 2020, when we boarded the Air India plane to New Delhi. Why I have used the word 'Miraculous', will be evident as the reader accompanies us on this journey.

We reached New Delhi the next morning at about 11a.m. and after the usual immigration and Covid 19 clearances, we caught a taxi to take us to our booked hotel in Tilak Nagar. On reaching the hotel, we found out that NRI'S (Non Resident Indians) and tourists were not to be allowed inside because of the threat of corona virus. We tried a couple of more hotels but none of them would accept our clientele. By this time the taxi driver was getting frustrated as it was a prepaid taxi but I assured him that he will be paid handsomely for his extra time. Eventually we decided to go to a friend's house. We reached their house in Ramesh Nagar and told them about our ordeal at the hotels. Our friends invited us to stay with them as they had a spare bedroom. We paid off the taxi driver and settled in their house for that night.

We had booked a train to go to Punjab the next day in the afternoon at 4.30 p.m. We reached the New Delhi Rail Station at 3.30 p.m. and boarded the train- 'The Shatabdi' to take us to 'Phagwara', a four and half hour journey. The Shatabdi is an excellent train with comfortable seats and serving really good snacks during the journey. We were in the first class coach where the service and snacks were a bit better than the other second class coaches. We reached Phagwara Jct. around 9 p.m. Our nephew was there to greet us and take us to his nearby village 'Gowaher'.

Next day, we hired a taxi to take us to Sri Bhaini Sahib, which is about 15 miles from Ludhiana on the Chandigarh Road. The occasion was the celebration of the 'Hola Muhalla Purab', which is celebrated with great fervour and devotion under the divine presence and patronage of Sri Satguru Uday Singh Ji. We enjoyed the devotional music and 'Parvachans' of holy saints for 2 days and on the third day we returned to the village.

We had booked train tickets to visit my sister and her sons at Raipur in Chhattisgarh on the 19th March. Prior to that, we visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Baba Bakala Gurdwara near Kartarpur, and Gurdwara Ber Sahib at Sultanpur Lodhi. This Gurdwara is the most important Gurdwara in the Sikh world, as Guru Nanak meditated here for over 18 years and it is here that he vanished in the River Vein and re-appeared after three days. It is believed that during that period He was enlightened in this visit to the abode of the ALL Mighty. His first words after his emergence were the Immortal

Gurbani wording of the 'Japji Sahib'. We also visited Kartarpur where an impressive 'Jang-e-Azadi' museum has been erected, honouring the freedom fighters of India. I would strongly recommend the visitors to Punjab not to miss this spectacular phenomenon. A full gallery is devoted to the Namdhari Shaheed Freedom movement and to Satguru Ram Singh Ji's revolutionary and divine life.

19th March, we boarded the train for a 30 hour, 1300 kilometre long journey to Raipur in Chhattisgarh. We reached the next day around 1.00 p.m. Our nephew was there to receive and take us to his lovely house. On the way we observed

One 'bazaar' completely shut down, as it came to light, that a day earlier a girl was diagnosed with corona virus in that area. Some other bazaars were open but a day after on 21st March everything was under a strict lockdown and we were trapped in the house with nowhere to go or do. Initially we had booked a sight-seeing tour to Udaipur and Mount Abu, but Rajasthan was the first state to apply the lockdown and ban all air and rail travel. We had no alternative but to stay in Raipur till the 29th March as all our air bookings were cancelled to Rajasthan.

Came the 23rd March and there were rumours that ALL Air and Trains might be cancelled throughout the country. A voice from inside me made me decide that we will be better off going to Delhi so we booked a flight that very day for 7.30 p.m. for New Delhi. There were only 2 flights that day and we booked in the first flight, reaching the airport at 5 p.m. Our

nephew stayed in the outside car park waiting for the flight to take off. After check in, while we were in the lounge, he rang and told us that ALL flights after this flight have been cancelled throughout India and we were 'lucky' to have boarded this last flight. I would like to mention here that air and rail transport to and from Raipur resumed after nearly 12 weeks. This was our first miracle.

We reached New Delhi around 9.30 p.m. The airport was in semi darkness and completely deserted. Outside the taxi stand was completely empty. A private taxi 'vallah' approached us and enquired where we wanted to go. To our reply that we wanted to go to Ramesh Nagar, the driver said that the cost would be 1700 rupees, when the usual rate is around 400 rupees. During this conversation, we got a couple of phone calls from our friends and relatives (with whom we were supposed to stay) , who told us that they were not in a position to accommodate us as all roads and lanes to their houses were barricaded by police and they were not allowing anybody to enter or come out. The hotels were out of question, as previously mentioned and were not entertaining any foreign lodgers, and now there was no taxi either as the previous one had departed. We were completely flabbergasted.

We were in a deep shock and pondering on what to do next, when suddenly a car arrived and a young man got out and asked us about our predicament. We told him that we were unable to go to our friends or relatives and no hotel is willing to accommodate us. He said he will get us a hotel, which will cost 4000 rupees a night and he will charge 1000 rupees. We agreed

and he took us to a nearby hotel in Mahipal Pur where he knew the management. The rooms were quite nice and neat with AC. We thanked the young man whose name is Chandra and took his contact number. This was our second miracle.

We were confined to our hotel room and for the next five/ six days that room served as our only recreational room with a telly and nothing else. The food served was of a poor quality as most of the ration in the hotel was getting scarce and further supplies were dwindling. Anyway after some time we dared to come out of our room and lounged on the terrace. The situation all around was grim and we noticed from the terrace roof that all roads were completely deserted with an occasional Police siren going off. This was like a jail now. Meanwhile, we applied to the British High Commission for repatriation to U.K., and lodged our details with the Embassy in Delhi. There was nothing else we could do except wait and pray.

On the 1st April, I received a photo on my phone of Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji, sent by Gursharan Singh Gushi. This photo of Satguru Ji, which replicated Guru Nanak in a divine blessing aura, hit me like a bolt of lightning and tears started flowing out of my eyes and from inside me a voice cried out to Satguru Ji to deliver us in this hour of need.

Looks like our prayers were answered and we got a phone call the next morning on the 2nd April, that there was a flight to London early morning of the 3rd April and would we like to be on it? We Okayed the flight for which we were going to be charged 80000 rupees each. We called Chandra again to

take us to the airport as the hotel taxi driver was making some lame excuses to derive more money out of us.

Chandra drove us to the airport, where we were stopped at the entrance. We showed the Security Police the copy of the air tickets and they let us through. We copied the tickets on Chandra's phone so that his return journey would be trouble-free as there were a lot of Police check points, which were not allowing any unnecessary traffic. This was our third miracle.

We boarded the plane and it took off at the right time at 2 a.m. The plane was half full as distancing of one seat was in operation. We reached London about 7 a.m. in the morning. We were the ONLY 2 passengers who were London bound, the rest were all Canadian passengers who were in transit to Canada. The Heathrow airport was in semi darkness and deserted similar to the Delhi airport. After immigration clearance, we were on our way out to the taxi stand, when we encountered a taxi driver displaying a placard with a name on it. We enquired from him about getting a taxi and he replied there were no taxis available unless it was booked in advance. He left us and went inside to collect his passenger. In the meantime I was trying to ring Uber taxis but my credit card had expired and during this period my phone battery also went dead. We had no idea what further steps we could take as there was nobody around and we were shivering in the 4 degree English weather.

Suddenly the taxi driver with the placard returned and enquired if we had found a taxi. To our negative reply, he said he would ring his company to find out if he could help. He asked our destination. We said Coventry and he was a bit surprised as this was London and Coventry was a long distance taxi ride but his company agreed and charged us £160, which we paid. We sat in his taxi and he dropped us in Coventry at 9.30.a.m. During the ride, we asked him what had happened to his client whose name was on the placard. He said his client's plane never arrived and he (the driver) was completely oblivious to this. We thanked him profusely and told him that he had come 'especially' for us and answer to our prayers. This was our fourth miracle.

CONCLUSION

After reading the above narration, some readers might argue that these incidents were mere coincidental. Coincidences happen once or twice, not four or five times. Our flight from Delhi, where we were the only couple who was London bound is a miracle on its own as there were thousands of British Subjects stranded in Delhi, who were waiting for flights to repatriate them to U.K. Here I would like to point out that repatriation flights from Delhi to U.K started after four to five weeks after our flight. The taxi drivers who met us at Delhi and Heathrow airports were also God sent.

The last but not least miracle is that we were not even charged for our seats by the airline, although they had taken our details. Repatriated passengers were charged three to four times the usual price of an air ticket. Now what would you call that?

Our Miraculous journey came to end with the grace and benevolence of Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji, the Supreme one. There are no words in any dictionary to sing His praise and express our undying gratitude.

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After my early education at City Primary School, I joined the newly built Eastleigh Secondary School in 1956.

The 'Eastleigh air' took the wind out of me and I barely managed to scrape through Form 4. The sense of humour and mannerisms of Mr. Joe D'Souza, the grammatical correctness of Mr. Mendonca and learning from M/S Hashmi and Sharma that two plus two does not necessarily add up to four – all still lingers in my memory. The most lovable of all, Mr. Balwant Singh Shant was our PT master whose 'Roar' of 'Haraamzade' was worse than his bite!

I left school in 1959 and joined Barclays Bank where I worked for about 8 years after which I got a diploma in 'Watch Making' and started working for the 'Omega' company. After a couple of years I opened my own business in Regal Mansion, Government Road, which I closed in 1975 and immigrated to England. I bought another jewellery business in Coventry, which I shut down in 1983 and joined Abbey Life as an insurance agent. After 'convincing' other people I convinced myself that this cajoling was not for me and I left that job.

I retired in 1995 and since then I have written and edited quite a few books in Punjabi and English and am in the process of writing two books at the moment. I have my own web site; which keeps me quite busy. I have three children, one son and two daughters, all married and well settled.